

Washington, DC -- Congresswoman Linda Sánchez (D-Lakewood) issued the following statement when casting her vote today in the House Committee on Education and Labor against H.R. 3685, a narrow version of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) that excludes protections based on gender identity. Congresswoman Sánchez is an original cosponsor of H.R. 2015, the original version of ENDA that was introduced earlier this year and prohibits workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Congresswoman Sánchez joined three other Democrats in opposing H.R. 3685 for similar reasons. The bill won approval by the Committee and is expected on the House floor next week. Congresswoman Sánchez is actively working to rally support for an anticipated amendment by Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin) to add gender identity protections into the legislation.

"I am pleased that last month, the Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions held a hearing on H.R. 2015, the original version of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act that was introduced earlier this year. I am a proud original cosponsor of that bill, which would prohibit workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

"I am disappointed that we're not marking up that bill today. Instead, we have a narrower, less inclusive version of the bill, which does not include gender identity.

"In the opening statement I submitted at last month's hearing, I said I was proud that as a member of this Committee, I was able to help make our employment laws consistent with our values.

"Unfortunately, this bill does not go far enough to enshrine American values into law because it fails to include protections to those who arguably need it most: transgender people, as well as those who don't conform to gender stereotypes. These are the most vulnerable people we sought to protect in H.R. 2015, the fully inclusive ENDA.

"I believe I am correct to say that it is an American value that it is unacceptable to deny someone a job, a raise, or a promotion for arbitrary factors beyond their job performance. And that is a value that holds true regardless of the worker's real or perceived gender identity.

"I am pleased that the bill before us today would provide protections to millions of Americans currently facing discrimination based on their sexual orientation, or perceived sexual orientation. Such discrimination is an injustice and this legislation correctly addresses it. I applaud the Chairman of the Committee for his desire to fight discrimination in the workplace, and for all he does on behalf of working families.

"However, because I believe we could have done better in this Committee today, by reporting out a fully inclusive ENDA, I will not vote for this legislation today.

"I hope that H.R. 3685 is not reported out of Committee today so that we can have an opportunity to build a consensus within this Committee, the House and the wider community, to advance a fully inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act."